

Department for Infrastructure

The Roads (Northern Ireland) Order 1993

The Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014

DEPARTMENTAL STATEMENT
on the
A29 COOKSTOWN BYPASS SCHEME

Environmental Impact Assessment Report Public Inquiry

Notice of Intention to Make a Direction Order Public Inquiry

Notice of Intention to Make a Vesting Order Public Inquiry

Notice of Intention to Make a Stopping-up of Private Accesses Order Public Inquiry

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. The Department for Infrastructure (DfI) Roads proposes to construct a new 3.9km bypass on the eastern corridor of Cookstown from the A29 Loughry Roundabout in the south to the A29 Moneymore Road in the north with new roundabouts situated at intersections with the Killymoon Road, Cloghog Road and Moneymore Road. The scheme objectives of the A29 Cookstown Bypass Project aim to:

- Relieve traffic congestion within Cookstown.
- Reduce journey travel times along the A29 corridor.
- Improve the road network between the north and south of the Province.
- Improve road safety.
- Improve the quality of life for the majority of residents.
- Improve the town centre environment.
- Minimise the impact on the natural and built environment.
- Enhance the economic growth of the area.
- Achieve value for money as demonstrated through a net positive return on investment.

1.2. Cookstown is located approximately 40km west of Belfast and is in County Tyrone. The existing A29 runs north/south through the centre of Cookstown, acting as the main local and through-traffic distributor road for the town. Cookstown has an estimated population of 12,550 and it plays an important regional role as an economic and employment centre, with retail and commercial interests predominantly focused along the A29 corridor and Sandholes Road. Settlement is concentrated around the A29 corridor in the town, with the spread of the built-up area greater to the west of the A29, with many farmsteads and individual dwellings scattered throughout the surrounding countryside. See Annex A for relevant Network and Scheme Maps.

1.3. The A29 at Cookstown (also referred as the Trunk Road T15), forms part of a strategic link corridor which provides access between the North Western and South Western Key Transport corridors and directly connects the regional settlements including Coleraine on the north coast through to (from north to south), Garvagh; Swatragh; Maghera; Tobermore; Desertmartin; Moneymore; Cookstown; Dungannon; Moy; Charlemont and Armagh.

- 1.4.** Through the town centre of Cookstown, the A29 acts as a spine road serving both strategic (through) traffic and local traffic. The conflicting trips create congestion, causing delays and driver frustration. The needs of public transport and pedestrians also add to the congestion.
- 1.5.** The construction of the bypass and removal of through traffic from the town centre would assist in reducing conflict between strategic and local traffic and thus assist in the reduction of both congestion and the risk of accidents. The current adverse effects of severance, noise, air quality and the impact on townscape are also likely to be reduced. This is expected to improve the quality of life for residents to the historic wide street town.
- 1.6.** Important ecological and wildlife habitats associated with the Ballinderry River and Killymoon Castle are ascribed national and local protection through Special Area of Conservation (SAC), Area of Special Scientific Interest (ASSI) and Site of Local Nature Conservation Importance (SLNCI) designation. Cultural heritage interests of national significance include the statutorily protected Court Tomb (Scheduled Monument), Killymoon Castle (Historic Park, Garden and Demesne), and Derryloran Old Church and Graveyard (under State Care). Several other local and regionally important unscheduled monuments are also recorded.

2. THE EXISTING SITUATION

2.1. The A29 is a trunk road with one lane in each direction, which travels directly through Cookstown town centre and carries the major regional traffic flow generated on the west side of Lough Neagh on a north-south route corridor. The A29 trunk road extends from Coleraine to Armagh, serving both strategic and local traffic around Cookstown. There are several principal roads (as shown on Map 1, Appendix A) which join the A29 in Cookstown, which include:

- A505 to Omagh
- B520 to Stewartstown
- B73 to Coagh
- B162 to Draperstown

2.2. Based on traffic surveys carried out in 2023, sections of the A29 through Cookstown carry close to 16,000 vehicles per day 2 way with hourly peaks in excess close to 1,300 vehicles recorded at Milburn Street (south of its junction with Moneymore Road).

2.3. To the south of Cookstown, the A29 Dungannon Road is linked to Sandholes Road, serving industry to the southwest of the town, and the B520 Tullywiggan Road by a roundabout known as the Loughry roundabout. The traffic speed at the roundabout is 40 miles per hour (mph).

2.4. On the A29 north of the roundabout, a speed limit of 30 mph is applied directly south of Kings Bridge which carries the A29 over the Ballinderry River. Retail outlets, commercial and residential properties border the A29 between the roundabout and the junction with Sweep Road and Castle Road. This section of the A29 consists of single carriageway approximately 8m wide with 2m wide footways on both sides of the road and there are ghost island junctions at the accesses of several retail and commercial properties.

2.5. From the signalised junction with Sweep Road and Castle Road to the junction with Fairhill Road (via the signalised junction at Cemetery Road / Fountain Road), the A29 consists of 12m wide single carriageway, with provision for on-street parking parallel to the kerb and footways on both sides of the road. There are wide footways on both sides of the road and pedestrian refuges opposite footway buildouts. This section contains various schools and churches notwithstanding various retail premises and residential properties scattered throughout.

- 2.6.** North of the priority junction with Fairhill Road to the junction of Orritor Road /Coagh Street, the A29 widens into two 8.5m wide carriageways, each with two traffic lanes, separated by a 1.5m wide hard central reservation. There is an additional 5m width of parking bays orientated perpendicular to the flow of traffic and 3.5m wide footways on both sides of the road. This section of the A29 passes through the town centre (which includes a priority controlled junction with Burn Road) and has several official names such as James Street and William Street but is known locally as Main Street. Retail and commercial properties are predominately located along both sides of the road.
- 2.7.** From the signalised junction with Orritor Street and Coagh Street, the A29 continues north (via Oldtown Street and Milburn Street) towards a double mini-roundabout junction with Morgans Hill Road and Lissan Road. The carriageway cross section reduces to a 12m wide single carriageway with on-street parking generally permitted parallel to the kerb and 4m wide footways on both sides of the road. There is a mix of retail premises and residential properties along this stretch of carriageway.
- 2.8.** Beyond the junction of Morgans Hill Road and Lissan Road, the A29 Moneymore Road continues northeast through a residential area. The speed limit increases to 40mph in advance of a priority T-junction with the East Circular Road and continues for a short distance after this junction for approx. 350 metres. North-east of this, the speed limit is unrestricted for a short section until the start of the dualling section which is restricted to 60mph and the A29 becomes a 3.5km section of rural dual carriageway with hard shoulders towards Moneymore.
- 2.9.** The horizontal alignment of the A29 is virtually straight through the town centre and the vertical alignment is undulating, with an overall rise of 30.8m from 46.5m Above Ordnance Datum (AOD) at the Loughry roundabout to 77.3m AOD at the junction with Morgans Hill Road and Lissan Road.
- 2.10.** Crests are located directly north of the junction with the A505 Drum Road, at the junctions with Convent Road and Fairhill Road and between the junctions with Orritor Street and Coagh Street and Morgans Hill Road and Lissan Road. Northeast of the junction with Morgans Hill Road and Lissan Road, the A29 falls to approximately 55.0m AOD at the start of the dual carriageway.

- 2.11.** Sandholes Road extends west of the Loughry roundabout as a single carriageway with a 2.5m shared footway cycleway on the northern side of the road. Traffic speed is derestricted, reducing to 40mph prior to the Strifehill Road junction. This speed restriction continues to the junction of Sandholes Link Road and continues along this road in a northerly direction where it changes to a 30mph restriction situated at the junction with Derryloran Estate Road. The 30mph restriction is applied on the approach to the junction with A505 Drum Road adjacent to Derryloran Old Church and Graveyard.
- 2.12.** Sandholes Link Road links the east-west Sandholes Road to the A505 Drum Road, in a north-south direction. This road has a concentration of industrial units on the west side and a mixture of industry and residential properties on the east side.
- 2.13.** Sandholes Link Road has a level of 60.0m AOD at the junction with Sandholes Road. The level reduces to 53.5m AOD forming a sag curve where the road crosses the culverted Fairy Burn watercourse. The road then rises to a crest of 63.2m AOD before falling back to a level of 55.0m AOD at the junction with the A505 Drum Road.
- 2.14.** Westland Road and Morgans Hill Road, located to the west of the A29, joins the A505 Drum Road in the south to the A29 Moneymore Road, (via a signalised junction with Orritor Street) to a double mini-roundabout junction with Morgans Hill Road and Lissan Road in the north. This route is a single carriageway with a footway on both sides and forms an alternative route through Cookstown for traffic travelling north-west, to and from Omagh, and for north-south traffic wishing to avoid the town centre. There is no similar route to the east of the town.

3. TRUNK ROADS AND GOVERNMENT POLICIES

- 3.1. The Department for Infrastructure is responsible for ensuring that the public road network is managed, maintained and developed. The Roads (Northern Ireland) Order 1993 defines the procedures to be followed when the Department proposes to build a new trunk road or carry out improvements to a road within the trunk road network.
- 3.2. The Regional Development Strategy for Northern Ireland 2035 (RDS) guides the future development of Northern Ireland. The RDS recognises the key role that the Regional Strategic Transport Network (RSTN) has to play in achieving the social, economic and development goals in Northern Ireland. The Regional Transportation Strategy for Northern Ireland 2002-2012 (RTS); identifies strategic transport investment priorities, potential funding sources and affordability of planned initiatives.
- 3.3. A revised strategy document, 'Ensuring a Sustainable Transport Future - A New Approach to Regional Transportation', was published in 2012. One of its main Strategic Objectives is to *"improve connectivity within the region"* by completing the work identified in the current Regional Strategic Transport Network Transport Plan (RSTN TP) and Strategic Road Improvement (SRI) Programme.
- 3.4. The RTS supports and complements the RDS 2035 and aims to achieve its vision for transportation, *"to have a modern, sustainable, safe transportation system which benefits society, the economy, and the environment and which actively contributes to social inclusion and everyone's quality of life."* The RSTN TP 2015 is based on guidance in the RDS and RTS. The plan presents a range of multimodal transport initiatives to manage, maintain and develop Northern Ireland's Strategic Transport Network and proposes SRIs to: *"Remove bottlenecks on the key road network where lack of capacity is causing congestion; and improve the environment by providing town bypasses, relieving the effects of heavy through traffic."*
- 3.5. The RSTN comprises the complete rail network, five Key Transport Corridors (KTCs), four Link Corridors, the Belfast Metropolitan Transport Corridors and the remainder of the trunk road network. The A29 is a trunk road (T15) and been classified as one of the four Link Corridors in the RSTN.
- 3.6. In 2008, the Strategic Investment Board announced the updated Investment Strategy for Northern Ireland (ISNI) 2008-2018 which outlined the Government's chief objectives for

infrastructure investment. The strategy envisaged an investment of £2.5 billion in SRIs up to 2018. Due to the envisaged additional investment, DfI produced an expanded SRI programme to further improve the motorway and trunk road network, known as 'Expanding the Strategic Road Improvement Programme 2015'. Together with the Investment Delivery Plan (IDP) 2008, these documents show how the Investment Strategy for Northern Ireland would be implemented. An improvement to the A29 trunk road was included in the Investment Delivery Plan (IDP) as a strategic road improvement in the forward planning schedule.

- 3.7.** The consistent vision of these strategies is “to have a modern, sustainable, safe transportation system which benefits society, the economy and the environment and which actively contributes to social inclusion and everyone’s quality of life”. The Cookstown Bypass scheme meets this vision by upgrading this section of the A29 route.
- 3.8.** The project also acknowledges the “Changing Gear document – A Bicycle Strategy for Northern Ireland – 2015. A combined cycleway / footway is being provided along the entire length of the bypass to provide an active travel link to the existing cycling infrastructure within the urban area of Cookstown.
- 3.9.** Exercise Explore Enjoy: A Strategic Plan for Greenways was published in November 2016. The aim of this Strategic Plan is to encourage a substantial increase in the number of people walking and cycling as a regular part of everyday life through the building of a connected and accessible regional Greenway Network which significantly increases the length of traffic-free routes. To future-proof the potential greenway scheme between Dungannon and Coleraine, two underpass structures are proposed where the proposed Bypass intercepts these railway lines to ensure connectivity is upheld and the Department's objectives as outlined in the Strategic Plan are met.
- 3.10.** Transport Planning 2020- 2035: A new suite of Transport Plans is being prepared by the Department for Infrastructure which is intended to set out the framework for transport policy and investment decisions up until 2035. The Transport Planning process is being carried out in parallel with the Local Development Plan process.
- 3.11.** The Department for Infrastructure (DfI) has undertaken a Local Transport Study for each of the five Councils that make up the Sub Regional Transport Plan Area which includes Mid Ulster District Council (MUDC). The MUDC Local Transport Study sets out an objective evidence-based assessment in relation to current and future transport issues, in the context of Council

growth ambitions and future indicative transport measures required to facilitate growth ambitions during the LDP period to 2030. A bypass of Cookstown is identified in this document as a future indicative transport measure for the Local Development Plan period 2030.

- 3.12.** The Mid Ulster District Council (MUDC) published the Local Development Plan 2030– Draft Plan Strategy in 2019. This Draft Plan Strategy sets out the MUDC vision for planning land use up to 2030 and details the objectives, spatial planning framework and planning policies which they propose to use to deliver that vision. Improving infrastructure and protecting the environment are central themes in the strategy. The A29 Bypass has been identified within the document as a key project to help deliver the strategic objectives of the Draft Plan Strategy.
- 3.13.** The A29 scheme has been appraised in accordance with the Government’s five key criteria: Safety, Environment, Economy, Accessibility and Integration.

4. SCHEME DEVELOPMENT, STATUTORY PROCEDURES AND PUBLIC CONSULTATION

- 4.1.** In June 2007, Roads Service (now DfI Roads) commissioned Mouchel Parkman (now WSP), to assist in the development of the A29 Cookstown Bypass scheme and completion of the required statutory procedures. A history of the scheme development is described below.
- 4.2.** An eastern distributor route to relieve the town centre was identified in the East Tyrone Area Plan 1974-1994 (published 1978). Part of this route, between the A29 Moneymore Road and Old Coagh Road, named the East Circular Road, which has now been constructed. In September 2004, Atkins issued a Scheme Appraisal for Cookstown Eastern Distributor Road. This report developed the findings of a JMP Consultants Cookstown Transportation Study, prepared in March 1999, and detailed a proposed route for strategic traffic, the Eastern Distributor Road, including an appraisal and horizontal and vertical geometry. A proposal for a Sandholes Link Road was also included to further reduce through traffic in the town centre by making the proposed eastern distributor more attractive for traffic travelling to / from Omagh, via the A505 Drum Road.
- 4.3.** The Eastern Distributor Road and Sandholes Link Road were included in The Cookstown Area Plan 2010 (Adopted Plan), and the A29 Cookstown Eastern Distributor was listed within the Regional Strategic Transport Network Transport Plan (RSTN TP) 2015 and the Investment Delivery Plan (IDP) as a strategic road improvement in the forward planning schedule. This consists of major highway schemes which could be started in the next 10 years, subject to clearing the statutory procedures, satisfactory economic appraisal and the availability of funds.
- 4.4.** Following publication of the Cookstown Area Plan 2010 in June 2004, a Cookstown Local Transport Study was prepared by Jacobs Babbie (dated September 2005). This study focused on the needs of local traffic, but also listed an Eastern Distributor Road, Sandholes Link, and an eastern bypass as possible means of reducing problems in the town centre.
- 4.5.** After a review of the previous reports and studies, it was agreed that alternatives to the Eastern Distributor Road should be considered. A Stage 1 Scheme Assessment in accordance with DMRB TD37/93, Scheme Assessment Reporting was undertaken to assess

the environmental, engineering, economic and traffic benefits, dis-benefits and constraints of broadly defined improvement corridors to the east and west of Cookstown (as shown on Map 2, Appendix A). The findings of this assessment were published in November 2008 in the A29 Cookstown Bypass Stage 1 Scheme Assessment Report - Constraints Report (SAR1).

- 4.6. The SAR1 concluded that the Eastern Corridor offered the best options for a bypass of Cookstown. The Eastern Corridor also includes the option of improving the existing road network between the Sandholes Road and the A505 Drum Road.
- 4.7. By contrast, bypass options within the Western Corridor were found to be considerably longer than those to the east due to existing development and the alignment of the existing A29 to the north east of the town centre. The assessment also highlighted the particular significance of the Upper Ballinderry River Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and Area of Special Scientific Interest (ASSI). There are also more significant flood plains and low-lying areas within the Western Corridor.
- 4.8. Improvements to the existing A29 through the town centre were considered and discounted early in the feasibility stage. Improvement options would be significantly constrained by existing development and the local road network, and the current adverse effects of severance, noise, air quality and the impact on townscape would remain and deteriorate further.
- 4.9. The SAR1 recommended that alternative bypass route options within the Eastern Corridor including improvements to the Sandholes Link Road were developed further in a Stage 2 scheme assessment in accordance with TD37/93.
- 4.10. Gateway 0 Approval was granted in December 2008 by Roads Service Board (now DfI Transport and Road Asset Management) for the scheme to move into the Preparation Pool. This is a list of high priority major highway schemes which could be started in the next 5 years, subject to clearing the statutory procedures, satisfactory economic appraisal and the availability of funds.
- 4.11. Subsequent to receiving Gateway Approval, a Stage 2 scheme assessment commenced and identified a preferred route for the bypass which was announced in June 2010 via a Public Information Day held at the South West College, Burn Road, Cookstown.

The purpose of the event was to invite comments from the public on the options being considered. The findings from this consultation event were one of the many factors taken into consideration during the assessment and identification of the preferred route.

4.12. This Stage 2 Scheme Assessment Report (SAR2) presented four route options for the bypass (coloured routes Red, Blue, Purple A & Purple B) all located to the east of Cookstown, with an improvement option also provided for Sandholes Link Road (as shown on Map 3, Appendix A). The Roads Service Directorate Board confirmed approval on the Purple A route and Sandholes Link Road during March 2010 but Gateway 1 approval to commence statutory procedures was not granted during this period.

4.13. Further development of the Preferred Route ceased in 2011 due to lack of funding until October 2016, when the then Minister for Infrastructure announced funding would be made available for a number of capital works schemes including the A29 Cookstown Bypass.

4.14. Due to the intervening timeframe between initial selection of the Preferred Route in 2010 and recommencement of the scheme in 2018, the decision to prepare a new Stage 2 assessment was agreed with DfI. Subsequently, the updated SAR 2 report reviewed various options (as shown on Map 4, Appendix A) and confirmed the Purple A option remained the Preferred Route and Gateway Approval 1 for the commencement of Statutory procedures was granted during November 2021.

A further two day Public Consultation was held at the Burnavon Arts and Cultural Centre, Cookstown in December 2021 on the Preferred Route to assess opinion and comments to the publication of the Emerging Design as recommended in the updated SAR 2 Report and the Department's Emerging design.

4.15. The SAR2 also recommended the following should be given further consideration at the SAR3 (preferred options development) stage:

- Road Safety: a review of the junction strategy at Castle Road.
- Climate Change: assess and mitigate the impact of the scheme on the environment.
- Active Travel: assess how the scheme interacts with other modes of transport.
- Alignment optimisation: A review of the alignment to reduce severance and improve the usability of residual land separated by the route, review the cut slope signature using a targeted Geotechnical Investigation, and maximise the cut fill

balance to reduce carbon and environmental impacts.

- Consultation: further consultation should be undertaken with, all relevant Statutory bodies, affected landowners and other relevant parties to mitigate impacts of the scheme, and Statutory Undertakers to develop utility diversions where necessary.

4.16. As part of the Stage 3 scheme assessment development work included completing a full Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR) examining the impacts of the scheme under a range of headings detailing the factors that would be put in place to mitigate the impact of the scheme. This assessment report also confirmed that the route referred to as the ‘Purple A Route Option’ along with Sandholes Link Road was taken forward as the Preferred Option.

4.17. Since early 2022, preliminary design work has developed and optimised the preferred route alignment whilst further considerations were given to road safety, climate change and active travel measures to form a specimen design. This included:

- The provision of dedicated active travel routes, crossings and facilities
- Upgrades to the existing Loughry Roundabout (extension to the east, addition of a fifth arm and realignment on Tullywiggan Road)
- The provision of a flood defence wall at Otter Lodge on the Ballinderry river
- The removal of a previously proposed retaining wall at the Wastewater Treatment Works (WWTW) via a value engineering process
- A revised 3-arm Killymoon roundabout arrangement
- The stopping up of eastern side of Castle Road and removal of the previously proposed overbridge
- The refinement of the bypass between B73 Coagh Road and U728 Old Coagh Road
- The addition of a segregated left turn lane at Moneymore Roundabout
- Smaller roundabouts on Sandholes Link Road section at Sandholes Road and Drum Road junctions
- The addition of drainage attenuation ponds and swale features
- The provision of two pedestrian overbridges at Killymoon Roundabout and Moneymore Roundabout
- The provision of two underpasses to future proof a potential greenway route
- The provision of toucan crossing point on Bypass adjacent to Loughry Roundabout

4.18. An external Gateway 1 Review was completed for the project in December 2023. Following on from this review, the Minister gave approval for publication of the draft Statutory Orders and the Environmental Impact Assessment Report.

In February 2024, WSP prepared a draft Stage 3 assessment (SAR3) structured into two distinct parts:

- Part 1 (the Environmental Impact Assessment Report); and
- Part 2 (the Engineering, Traffic and Economic Assessment Report).

4.19. Detailed cost estimates for the Proposed Scheme were developed at Stage 3 and indicated a total scheme cost of approximately £70 million.

4.20. The SAR3 economic assessment confirmed the SAR2 findings remain valid, and the Proposed Scheme continues to offer high value for money with a Benefit Cost Ratio of 3.98. The scheme is forecast to generate significant levels of users benefits with a Present Value Benefit ranging between £117-£151 million. The overall Net Present Value for the core scenario is approximately £102 million and between the demand scenarios, the Net Present Value ranges are from £83-£117 million.

4.21. The SAR3 Report recommended that implementation of the Proposed Scheme would improve conditions for both strategic and local road users by enhancing the transport network and that the scheme be taken forward through to the next Statutory Order publication stages.

4.22. The documents published in the Belfast Gazette, the News Letter, the Irish News, the Belfast Telegraph, the Mid Ulster Mail and the Tyrone Courier in April 2024 for the statutory public consultation w/c 1st April 2024 included the following:

- Environmental Impact Assessment Report
- Notice of Intention to Make a Direction Order
- Notice of Intention to Make a Vesting Order; and
- Notice of Intention to Make a Stopping Up (of private accesses) Order.

4.23. The documents listed in paragraph 4.22, were available for inspection by members of the public or their representatives, during normal office hours, at the following locations:

- Location A – Dept. of Infrastructure HQ, Clarence Court, Adelaide Street, Belfast BT2 8GB;

- Location B – Dept of Infrastructure, Western Division, County Hall, Drumragh Avenue, Omagh, BT79 7AF;
- Location C – Dept. of Infrastructure, Mid-Ulster Section Office, Loughry, Tullywiggan Road, Cookstown, BT80 8SG;
- Location D – The Burnavon Arts and Cultural Centre, Burn Road, Cookstown, BT80 8DT.

4.24. A Public Exhibition (supported by a virtual room display) was held in conjunction with the publication of the draft Statutory Orders and the Environmental Impact Assessment Report on the 16th April 2024 at the Burnavon Arts and Cultural Centre, Burn Road, Cookstown.

4.25. The documents were made available for inspection at four locations during the Statutory Consultation period which ran from 3rd April 2024 to 29th May 2024. The published documents, virtual room display and scheme flyover video were also available to view online.

4.26. During the consultation period, various responses were received and are categorised as follows:

- 27 no. Objections
- 10 no. Queries / Clarifications
- 3 no. letters of Support
- 68 no. comment cards received from the consultation day (62 no. positive / neutral & 6 no. negative)

4.27. The nature of the objections received generally concerned issues specific to individual's (landowners of other stakeholders) preferences on certain aspects of the scheme. The main issues raised by the objections are summarised as follows:

- Loss of land at Killymoon Golf Club;
- Proposed design of a new 3 arm roundabout at Killymoon Road ;
- Provision of a flood wall at Otter Lodge;
- Impact on various properties including valuation, air quality and noise;
- Closure of Strifehill Road.
- Active travel proposals at Cloghog Road Roundabout
- Concerns regarding provision of underpasses for a potential future greenway project

- 4.28.** The Department responded to all objections via correspondence or site meetings and as a result of this follow-up consultation, 7 objections have since been withdrawn. Further landowner meetings are ongoing to discuss these issues in an attempt to resolve matters in advance of the Public Inquiry.
- 4.29.** On consideration of the responses submitted to the statutory consultation, the Department has determined it appropriate to convene a Public Inquiry to examine the case for and against the scheme.
- 4.30.** A further representation was received by the Department after the consultation period ended relating to lands adjacent to Loughry Roundabout.

5. PUBLIC INQUIRY

- 5.1.** The Department has appointed Eileen Larkin and Jeremy Mills as the Inspectors to the Inquiry. Formal notice of the intention to hold a Public Inquiry has been published in the Belfast Gazette, the News Letter, the Irish News, the Belfast Telegraph, the Mid Ulster Mail and the Tyrone Courier during w/c 26th August 2024.
- 5.2.** The Department has prepared responses to the submissions received in relation to the Statutory Consultation process and these were be issued to those who have made submissions, prior to the Inquiry.
- 5.3.** Prior to the Public Inquiry, the documents listed in Annex B will be available for inspection by members of the public or their representatives, during normal office hours, at the following locations:
- Location A – Dept. of Infrastructure HQ, James House, Gasworks Site, 2-4 Cromac Avenue, Belfast BT7 2JA;
 - Location B – Dept of Infrastructure, Western Division, County Hall, Drumragh Avenue, Omagh, BT79 7AF;
- 5.4.** Electronic copies of the documents listed in Annex B are also available for inspection, or download, by members of the public or their representatives at any time via the link below: dfiroads.western@infrastructure-ni.gov.uk
- 5.5.** Copies of the documents listed in Annex B will be made available for inspection during the Public Inquiry at its venue - Glenavon Hotel, Drum Road, Cookstown, BT80 8JQ.
- 5.6.** Evidence submitted to the Public Inquiry by DfI and its appointed consultants, along with copies of information exchanged with objectors, will be made available for inspection for the duration of the Public Inquiry, at its venue.

6. THE DEPARTMENT'S CONSIDERATION

- 6.1.** The Department for Infrastructure (DfI) proposes to construct a new 3.9 km bypass on the eastern corridor of Cookstown, from the A29 Loughry Roundabout in the south to the A29 Moneymore Road in the north, with new roundabouts situated at intersections with the Killymoon Road, Cloghog Road and Moneymore Road. Overbridges are also proposed at Coagh Road and Old Coagh Road with walking and cycling facilities incorporated along the full extent of the by-pass to enhance sustainability of the project.
- 6.2.** There is also carriageway improvement works proposed on the Sandholes Link Road to improve connectivity for strategic traffic from the A29 Loughrey Roundabout to the A505 Drum Road. A new shared footway / cycleway is proposed on Sandholes Link Road which would provide improved access to nearby residential and industrial estates.
- 6.3.** The following four criteria, as set out in the Government's Transport Analysis Guidance (TAG), are the overarching main objectives for transport:
- Economy - to support sustainable economic activity and get good value for money.
 - Environment - to protect the built and natural environment.
 - Social - to improve safety, accessibility, and integration.
 - Public Accounts - to consider the cost to the broad transport budget.
- 6.4.** The A29 Cookstown Bypass Project specific Scheme Objectives aim to:
- Relieve traffic congestion within Cookstown.
 - Reduce journey travel times along the A29 corridor.
 - Improve the road network between the north and south of the Province.
 - Improve road safety.
 - Improve the quality of life for the majority of residents.
 - Improve the town centre environment.
 - Minimise the impact on the natural and built environment.
 - Enhance the economic growth of the area.
 - Achieve value for money as demonstrated through a net positive return on investment.
- 6.5.** DfI has considered the options available and concluded that implementation of the proposed scheme would greatly benefit both strategic and local road users by relieving congestion, improving safety and the reliability of journey times.

7. THE PROPOSED SCHEME

The proposed A29 scheme is broken down and detailed as follows:

- **Mainline: Loughry Roundabout to Killymoon Roundabout**

The existing A29 Dungannon Road / Loughry roundabout will be upgraded and extended east, creating a fifth arm to the existing roundabout and realigning Tullywiggan Road. The bypass road layout is a Wide Single 2+1 carriageway (WS2+1 arrangement as defined by CD 109 Revision 1 as a road with two lanes of travel in one direction and a single lane in the opposite direction). The carriageway features two lanes northbound and one lane southbound between the two roundabouts. This section includes the provision of a 27 metre single span bridge over the Ballinderry River and the realignment of the Fairy Burn watercourse. On the approach northwards towards Castle Road, the route passes through a narrow section between the Ballinderry River and the Waste Water Treatment Works (WWTW) site. Castle Road will be stopped-up where it is crossed by the bypass, with a pedestrian link provided on the western side of the bypass onto the Bypass footway / cycleway. The annexed part of Castle Road (east of the bypass) will be accessed via a new link road onto the proposed Killymoon Road roundabout and onwards to the Bypass. The bypass ties into a new three arm roundabout (45m ICD) at Killymoon Road, from which vehicular access to Killymoon Golf Course, Killymoon Castle and the annexed Castle Road (east) is provided via the new Link Road running adjacent to the Golf Course's boundary. A 3.0m wide shared use footway / cycleway adjacent the bypass' northbound lane is proposed the entire length of the scheme. Pedestrian crossing movements will be facilitated by a Toucan crossing close to Loughry Roundabout and also an overbridge structure, south of the Killymoon roundabout to maintain active travel linkage to Killymoon Golf Club, Killymoon Castle and Castle Road residents. On the western side of Killymoon roundabout, the Killymoon Road is to be stopped up to vehicular traffic with a turning head provided and only pedestrian access permitted.

- **Mainline Killymoon Roundabout to Cloghog Roundabout:**

From Killymoon roundabout, the route continues north-east to the east of Festival Park. The carriageway layout continues as a WS2+1 arrangement between the two roundabouts, however switches with one lane northbound from Killymoon roundabout and two lanes southbound from Cloghog roundabout. A four-arm roundabout (45m ICD) is proposed for the connection to Cloghog Road east of Festival Park. An underpass in the vicinity of the

old railway line (south of Festival Park) is provided for future proofing of a potential greenway project.

- **Mainline Cloghog Roundabout to Moneymore Roundabout:**

North from Cloghog roundabout to Old Coagh Road, the carriageway layout continues as a WS2+1 arrangement with two lanes northbound and one lane southbound. The route passes over Coagh Road and Old Coagh Road on embankments, allowing the respective side roads to remain open via an underbridge (mainline over side road). A WS2+1 changeover is proposed on the bypass in the vicinity of Old Coagh Road, where the mainline arrangement switches to one lane northbound and two lanes southbound. The route continues towards the A29 Moneymore Road, where it connects with the A29 Moneymore Road and Tamlaghtmore Road via a four-arm roundabout (60m ICD). A segregated left turn lane for southbound traffic from Moneymore onto the bypass will be provided. The existing dual carriageway is proposed to be reduced, with a new termination point located 165m to the north-east of its current location, with a section of the central reserve to be stopped up (preventing vehicular crossing movements). An underpass in the vicinity of the old railway line (north of Old Coagh Road) is provided for future proofing a potential greenway project.

- **Mainline Junctions:**

The bypass mainline proposes four new at-grade junctions:

- Loughry roundabout;
- Killymoon Road roundabout;
- Cloghog Road roundabout; and
- A29 Moneymore Road roundabout.

- **Mainline Side Roads:**

The mainline crosses several side roads, which as part of the works will undergo a series of improvements to existing road safety, such as realigned horizontal and vertical geometry, improved cross section (larger verges) as well as greater forward sight distance.

The bypass proposes to include four side road adjustments:

- Castle Link Road;
- Clare Lane Improvement Works;
- Coagh Road; and
- Old Coagh Road.

- **Sandholes Link Road:**

Sandholes Link Road commences at Sandholes Road opposite the Ballyreagh Industrial Estate creating a new three-arm roundabout (32m ICD). A 3.0m wide (typical) shared use footway / cycleway is proposed adjacent the Sandholes Link Road's northbound lane. The route continues on the line of the existing carriageway northwards for a distance of approx. 600m towards the junction with Drum Road. The cross section widens for provision of right turn pockets for the Derryloran Industrial Estate and Old Rectory Park leading onto a new at-grade, three-armed roundabout (32m ICD) at the Drum Road junction.

- **Road Closures:**

There are several road closures and diversions proposed. These include:

- Castle Road would be stopped up where it is crossed by the bypass to avoid traffic from entering the town. Castle Link Road will be provided to accommodate access to the proposed Killymoon Road roundabout and onwards to the Bypass. Turning heads will be provided either side of the bypass.
- Killymoon Road will also be stopped up where it crosses the bypass to stop vehicles accessing the town. A turning head will be provided on the western-side of the bypass. A private access lane will be provided onto the proposed Castle Link Road to offer and maintain access to and from Killymoon Golf Club and Killymoon Castle.
- The existing Tamlaghtmore Road / Moneymore Road junction located further north-east from the new Moneymore roundabout is proposed to be stopped up and a turning head provided; combined with the stopping up of the central reserve on the dual carriageway. This will eliminate dangerous U-turns and force drivers to use the proposed Moneymore roundabout, resulting in improved road safety.
- Tamlaghtmore Road sliproad is proposed to be stopped-up where the SuDS retention pond is proposed to discharge the realigned Claggan Lane watercourse.
- The existing junction of Strifehill Road / Sandholes Link Road is proposed to be stopped up to avoid any traffic using this road to bypass the proposed Sandholes Road / Sandholes Link Road roundabout. A turning head will be provided at the northern junction and there will be a 2.0m wide footway put in place on the Strifehill Road with the provision of an uncontrolled pedestrian crossing in the vicinity of the existing junction (which currently links Strifehill Road and Sandholes Road).

- **Public Utilities:**

Public utilities impacted by the Proposed Scheme include BT Apparatus, NIW Apparatus, NIE Apparatus and SGN Apparatus. These services are affected where the bypass crosses the existing road network and will require minor diversionary works.

- **Structures:**

The Mainline requires a total of eighteen primary structures, which will incorporate a bridge crossing over the Ballinderry River, overbridges at Coagh Road and Old Coagh Road, footway/cycleway overbridges, underpasses to facilitate livestock and a potential greenway project, various culverts/ retaining structures and a flood protection wall. Sandholes Link Road will also require provision of several retaining structures and alterations to an existing culvert.

- **Geotechnical:**

Extensive geotechnical investigations were undertaken to inform the design. The existing geotechnical ground conditions indicate that the cohesive glacial deposits on site will provide suitable founding strata for the bypass embankments, with some ground improvements and slope strengthening measures also likely being required.

- **Drainage:**

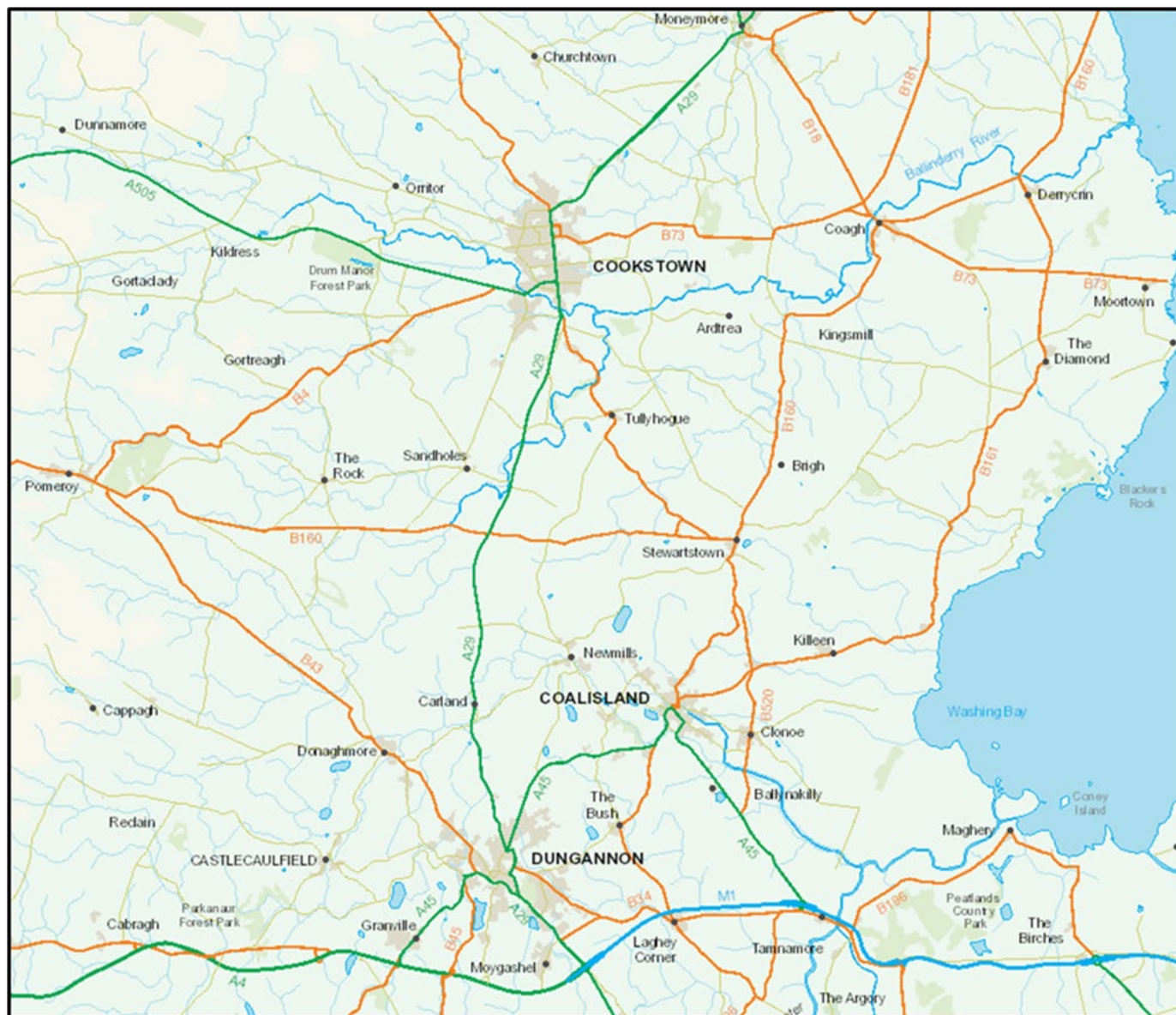
The drainage system has been designed to drain, attenuate, and treat the bypass and side roads in accordance with DMRB guidance and sustainable drainage best practice. The design consists of Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDs) in the form of retention ponds and swales, filter drains and grassed ditches that will include combined Drainage Kerb Systems. There is a short realignment of the Fairy Burn adjacent to the new Ballinderry River bridge and Claggan watercourse adjacent to the new Moneymore Roundabout. Additionally, the Stage 3 Flood Risk Assessment indicates that the impact of the Proposed Scheme is deemed overall neutral significance and low risk with appropriate mitigation measures in place.

8. CONCLUSIONS

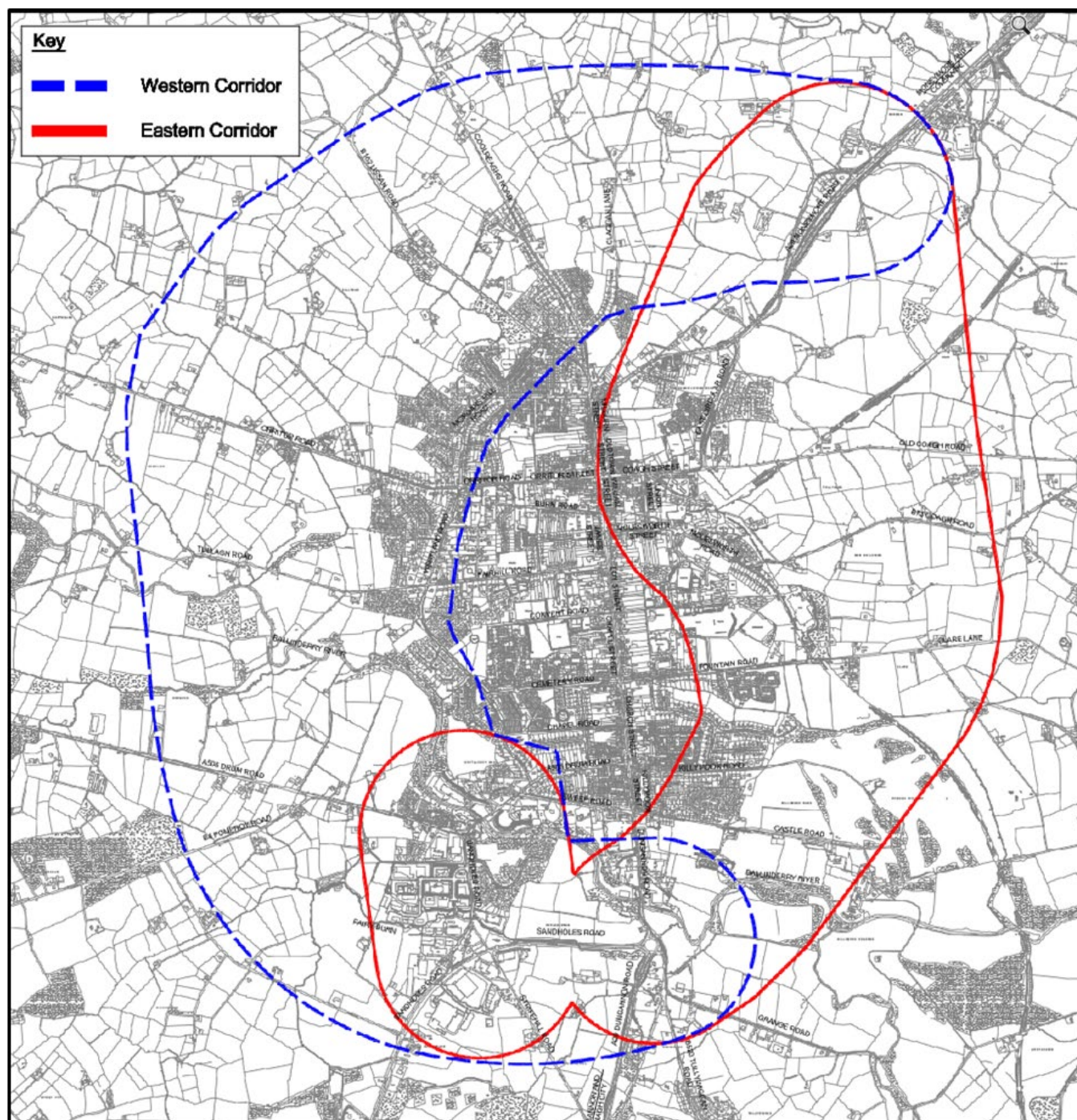
- 8.1.** DfI has undertaken a comprehensive analysis of the options for the Proposed Scheme. The development of the Preferred Route has been carried out in accordance with the requirements of the Department, complies with the relevant standards, and meets the A29 Cookstown Bypass Project Scheme Objectives. The Traffic Assessment has indicated the proposed scheme will result in reduced journey times between Moneymore Road and Dungannon Road via the bypass by more than 50%. Secondary and incidental routes in the surrounding areas would also benefit from reduced journey times upon completion of the bypass. Accident savings are predicted to range between £12-£14 million with approximately 400 fewer accidents and 500 fewer casualties predicted over 60 years post scheme.
- 8.2.** The scheme is forecast to generate significant levels of user benefits with a Present Value Benefit ranging between £117-£151 million. After consideration of Present Value Costs, the overall Net Present Value for the core scenario was approximately £102 million. Between the demand scenarios the Net Present Value ranges from £83-£117 million. The Proposed Scheme continues to offer high value for money with a Benefit Cost Ratio of 3.98.
- 8.3.** Implementation of the Proposed Scheme will improve conditions for both strategic and local road users by enhancing the transport network. The scheme will minimise the impact on the natural and built environment, alleviate traffic congestion, whilst enhancing the economic growth of the Cookstown and wider network, and demonstrates high value for money with fewer accidents and casualties predicted. It is recommended that the scheme be taken forward through to the next Statutory Order publication stages.

ANNEX A

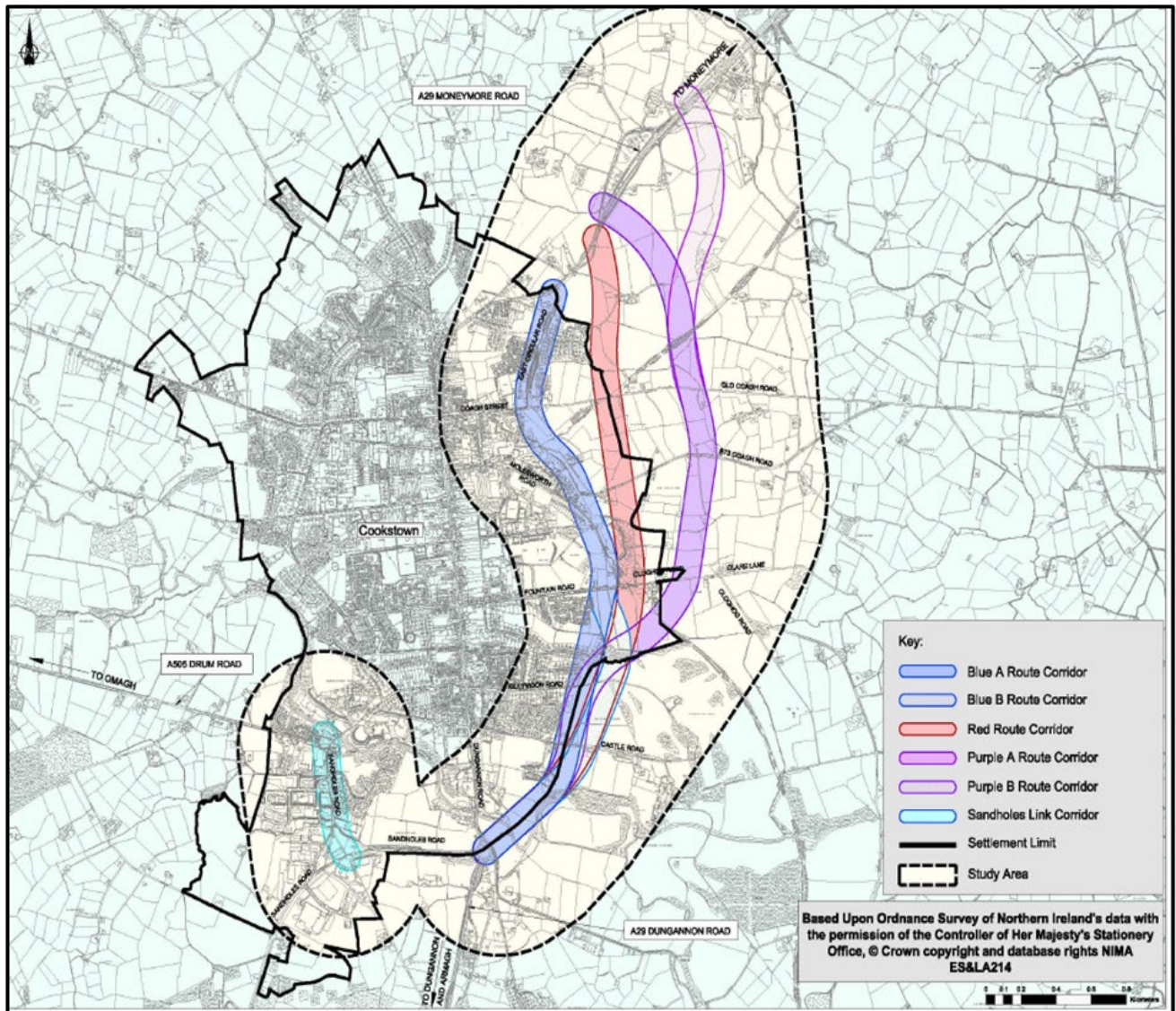
Map 1 - Cookstown Area Road Network



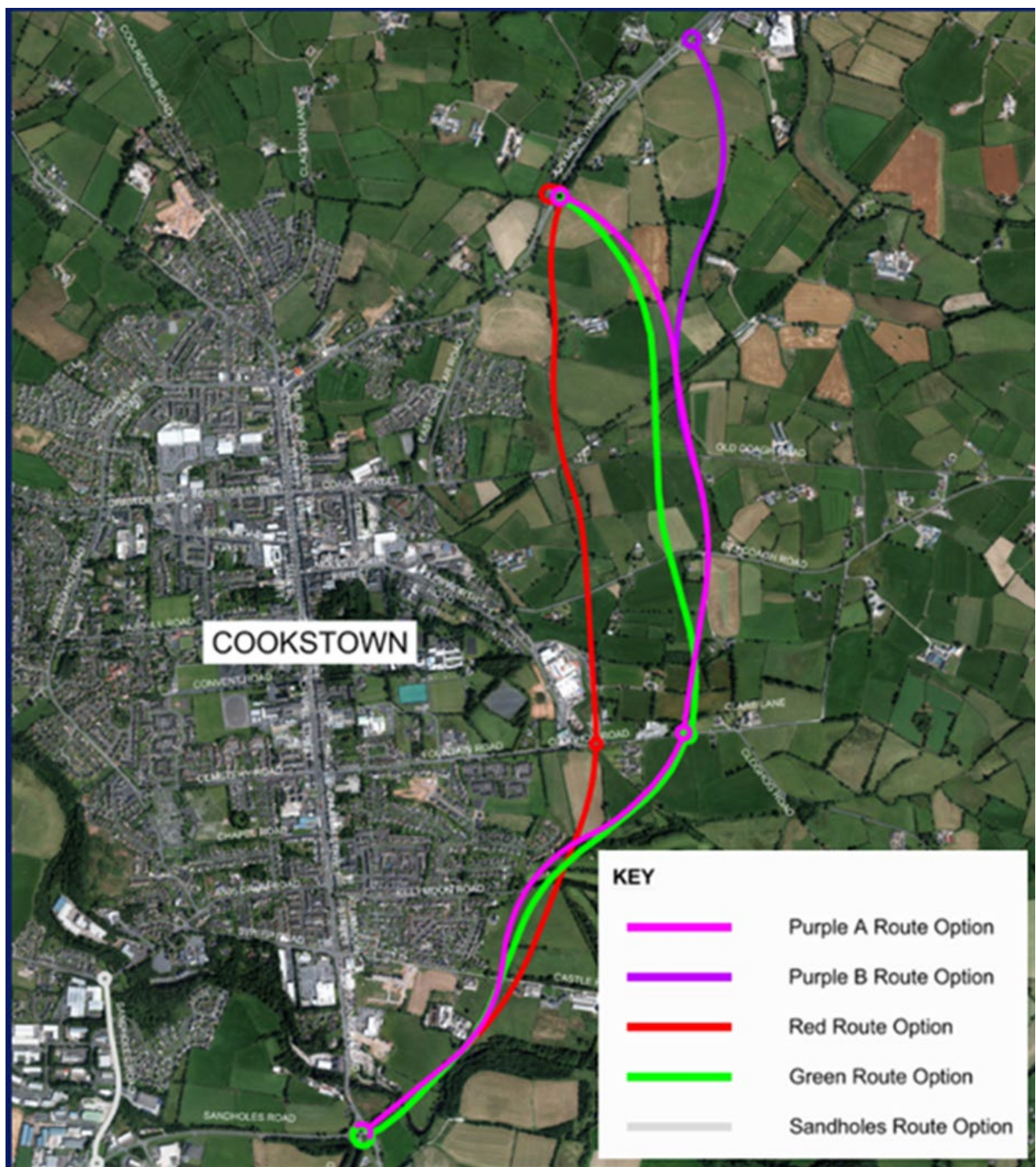
Map 2 – Extent of Western and Eastern Study Corridors



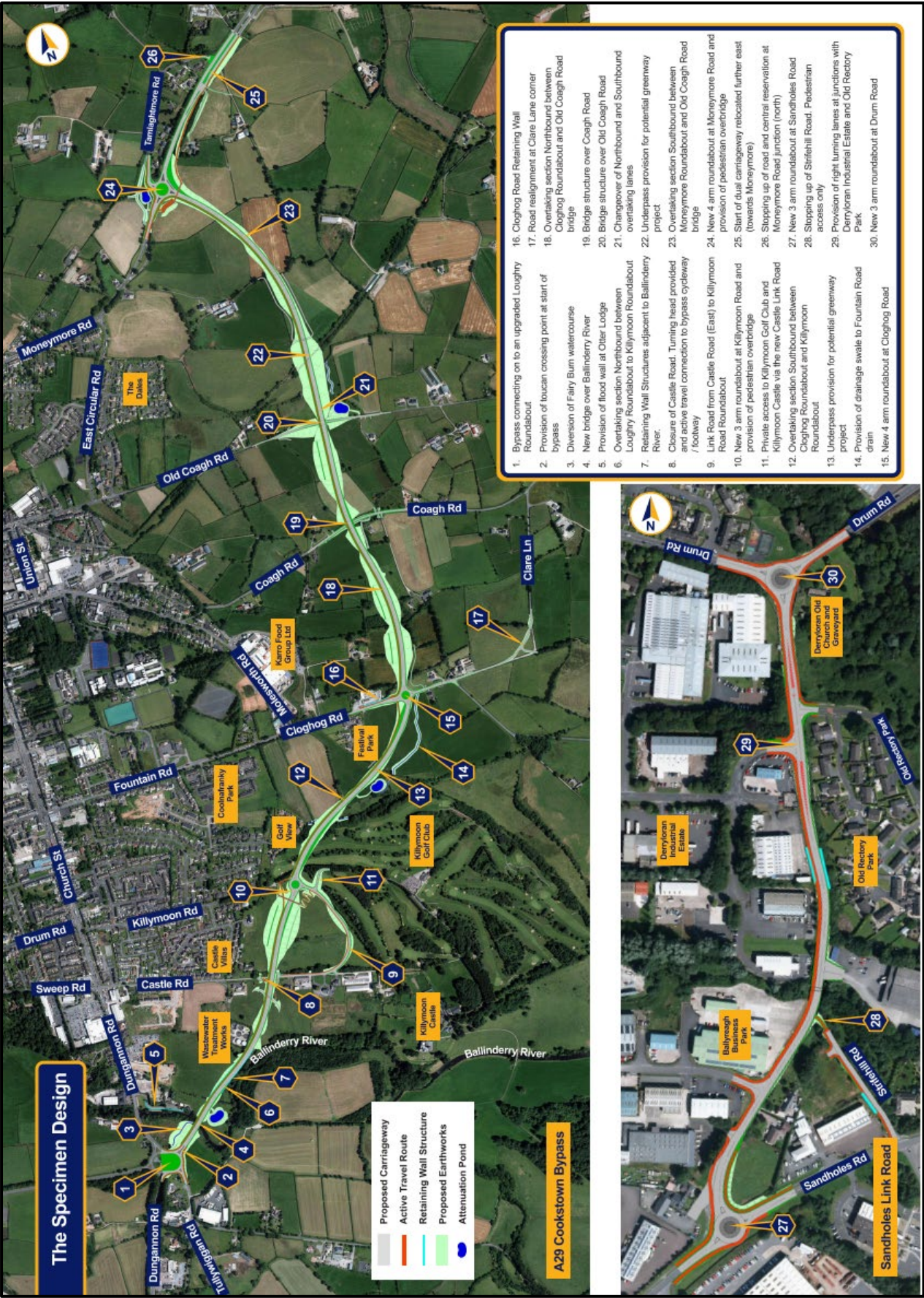
Map 3 - SAR 2 Route Options Map – 2009



Map 4 – Revised SAR 2 Route Options Map – 2021



Map 5- Preferred Route (The Specimen Design)- 2024



ANNEX B

Project Reports

- Stage 1 Scheme Assessment Report (Preliminary Options Report) 2008;
<https://www.infrastructure-ni.gov.uk/publications/a29-cookstown-bypass-stage-1-scheme-assessment-report>
- Stage 2 Scheme Assessment Report (Preferred Options Report), 2021;
<https://www.infrastructure-ni.gov.uk/publications/a29-cookstown-bypass-stage-2-scheme-assessment-report-2021>
- Stage 3 Scheme Assessment Report (Proposed Scheme Option Report), 2024;
<https://www.infrastructure-ni.gov.uk/publications/a29-cookstown-bypass-stage-3-scheme-assessment-report>

Project Statutory Orders

- A Composite Notice of Intention was published week commencing 1st week in April 2024. This included the Environmental Impact Assessment: Notice of Publication, a Notice of Intention to Make a Direction Order, a Notice of Intention to Make a Stopping Up (of Private Accesses) Order, a Notice of Intention to Make a Vesting Order.
<https://www.infrastructure-ni.gov.uk/publications/a29-cookstown-bypass-composite-notice>

Details of the published documents included within the Composite Notice are as follows;

- Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR), comprising:
 - EIAR Non-Technical Summary;
 - EIAR Volume 1 – Chapters 1-18;
 - EIAR Volume 2 – Parts 1-5
 - EIAR Volume 3 – Appendices 1.1 – 16.1.

The Trunk Roads T10 & T15 (Cookstown Bypass Scheme) Order (Northern Ireland) 2024 (known as the Direction Order), comprising:

- Notice of Intention to Make a Direction Order (NIMDO) including Schedule;
- Map 1.
<https://www.infrastructure-ni.gov.uk/publications/a29-cookstown-bypass-direction-order>

Draft Stopping Up (of Private Accesses) Order, comprising:

- Notice of Intention to Make a Stopping up (of Private Accesses) Order including

Schedule;

- Maps 1-12.

<https://www.infrastructure-ni.gov.uk/publications/a29-cookstown-bypass-stopping-order>

Draft Vesting Order, comprising:

- Notice of Intention to Make a Vesting Order (NIMVO) including Schedule;
- An Overview Map;
- Maps 1-7a (8 no).

<https://www.infrastructure-ni.gov.uk/publications/a29-cookstown-bypass-vesting-order-maps>

Submissions for Public Inquiry

Proposed A29 Cookstown Bypass Departmental Statement for the Public Inquiry.

Submissions received to the publication of the Project Draft Statutory Orders.